**INTRODUCTION**

**As the apostle Paul concludes his heartfelt letter to the church at Corinth, he addresses one more important worship topic - giving. Given that the church in Corinth was among the wealthiest, it is sadly ironic that Paul must instruct them in giving. From this we understand that where there is a lack of love, there will also be a lack of generosity (Paul develops this more fully in his next letter to this church – II Corinthians).**

**Sacrificial giving has always been a part of the relationship between God and the human family. The first record of giving is found in Genesis, when Adam’s sons (Abel and Cain) brought “an offering unto the Lord” (Genesis 4:3). After the Great Flood, Noah built an altar and “offered burnt offerings” upon it (Genesis 8:20). When God called Abram (whom He eventually renamed Abraham), the patriarch responded by building altars and offering sacrifices. After he rescued his nephew Lot from the Canaanite kings, Abram offered the tithe (or tenth) of all the recovered goods to Melchizedek, the mysterious “priest of the most high God” (Genesis 14:18-20).**

**The specific context of this passage is the financial support of the “mother church” in Jerusalem, which was severely impoverished by the persecutions it had endured (Acts 8:1-3; 12:1-4). This church, which Paul himself had attacked before his conversion, now needed outside support, and some of the Gentile churches established by Paul had already sent help.**

1. **Read verses 1-4. What is the concern that Paul raises in this passage? (v. 1) Answer: It concerns the for the .**
2. **When should this collection be made, and WHY? (v. 2) Answer:**
3. **Who will be receiving this collection, and HOW? (v. 3) Answer:**
4. **What does Paul offer to do? (v. 4) Answer:**
5. **Read verses 5-9. It will help you understand this passage if you have a map (many Bibles include useful maps of this area). What is Paul’s (travel-related) intention? (v.5) Answer: When he passes through , he wants to visit them.**
6. **How long does Paul wish to stay with the Corinthians (verses 6-7)?**
7. **Who makes the final decision as far as Paul’s plans are concerned (v. 7; see also James 4:13-15)?**
8. **Paul was in the city of Ephesus when he wrote this letter. How long does he plan on staying in Ephesus? (v. 8) Answer: He will stay in Ephesus until . (See Acts 2:1-4)**
9. **What TWO reasons does Paul give for remaining in Ephesus? (v. 9; see also Revelation 3:7-8)**
10. **Read verses 10-12. In this passage, who else does Paul mention as possibly visiting the church at Corinth? Answer: and . How are the Corinthians supposed to treat them (in your own words)?**
11. **Read verses 13-14. What “FIVE commandments” does Paul give the Corinthians? (See also Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36; Acts 20:29-31; Philippians 4:1; II Thessalonians 2:15; Isaiah 35:3-4; Ephesians 6:10) Answer:**
12. **In light of what we have learned in this study of I Corinthians, which might you consider to be the “greatest” of these five commandments? (v. 14; see also Ephesians 3:14-19; Philippians 1:3-11; Colossians 3:12-15; I Thessalonians 4:9-12)**
13. **Read verses 15-18. This passage is devoted to Stephanas and his family. What would have been special about them to the apostle Paul? (v. 15) Answer: His “house” (family) was the of the region of Achaia, where Corinth is located.**
14. **What kind of Christian was Stephanas? Choose three words that you would use to describe him. (v. 16-18)**
15. **What were Paul’s instructions to the church concerning people like Stephanas? (v. 16, 18)**
16. **Read verses 19-24. We have now come to the last passage of this chapter, and the conclusion of this letter. How fitting that it contains a picture of the outward expression of love (v. 20), a personal profession of love (v. 24), and a solemn warning to those who lack love for Jesus Christ (v. 22). Who offered a *salute* (Greek: aspazomai, meaning “to enfold in the arms”; translated as “greet” in verse 20) to the church at Corinth? (v. 19) Answer: the of Asia, along with and his wife .**
17. **How did Paul instruct the Corinthian believers to greet one another? (v. 20) Answer: With a . Would such a greeting be welcomed today? Why or why not? (Hint: See Jude 1:3-4, 8-13)**
18. **What does Paul say about those who DO NOT love the Lord Jesus Christ? Answer: “Let them be “. Do some research and find the meaning of these two words.**
19. **Finally, what two blessings does Paul bestow upon the Corinthian church? (v. 23 - 24) Answer:**

**Summary**

**We have finally come to the end of our study of this wonderful letter to the church at Corinth. What a journey! We wanted to focus on the “Love Chapter” – Chapter 13. Through this study, we have not only learned about Christian love; we have seen what happens in a church that lacks it. Perhaps this is why the Lord threatens to deal so severely with the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7 (key verses 4-5). The “first love” of the church should be Jesus Christ. Sadly, one can go through all of the motions of worship and even try to do ministry without loving Jesus (see John 14:15-24)! The symptoms of a lack of love for Christ and each other are: divisions, strife, arguing over the value of their spiritual gifts, unforgiveness, sinful life choices and lifestyles and so on. Christian love – unconditional, freely given and gratefully received, was the solution.**

**Now, let us apply this to our church. We have pointed out through this whole letter how essential Christian love is to a church. The bottom line is this: people avoid and criticize churches where love is lacking; people join and praise churches where love is overflowing. Let’s look at our own “L.Q.” – Love quotient. Are we gifted, above average, average, or below average, when it comes to love? Can we improve our “L.Q”? If so, how? What TWO behaviors can each of us change as an individual and we all can change as a church that would bring about more Christian love? Think about it; and may the Lord lead us all to a closer walk with Him and each other.**